DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 324 460 CE 055 981

AUTHOR Nel, Johanna
TITLE The Role of Literary Associations in the Education of Adults at the Turn of the Century.
PUB DATE Oct 90
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northern Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (8th, Greeley, CO, October 4-7, 1990). Dot matrix type.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Adult Education; *Adult Literacy; *Community Organizations; Community Programs; *Educational History; *Literacy Education; *Social Organizations; State Programs; Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS *Wyoming

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of literacy associations in the education of adults in Wyoming at the turn of the century. Information was gathered through extensive analysis of published and unpublished documents, especially primary resources in several archives and libraries, and from newspapers of the period. Evidence suggests that literary associations played a major role in the provision of learning opportunities for adults during the pioneer years of the state. Although various organizations, such as fraternal groups, women's clubs, and church groups, contributed to the education of adults, literary associations appear to have had the most clearly developed educational goals. In most other instances, the education of adults was viewed as a coordinate function. However, with two exceptions, literary societies were limited to men. The main agency for the creation of learning opportunities for women during the early years appears to have been women's clubs. (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED324460

THE ROLE OF LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS IN THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

by

Johanna Nel (Ph.D)

Paper presented at the 8th Annual Meeting of the Northern Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (NRMERA), Greeley, Colorado, Oct. 4-7, 1990.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J Nel

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE055981

THE ROLE OF LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS IN THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to summarize the findings of a study which investigated the role of literary associations in the education of adults in Wyoming at the turn of the century. Evidence indicates that literary groups had clearly developed educational goals and that they made a significant contribution towards adult learning in the state.

RATIONALE

Several scholars have expressed concern at the general lack of historical studies in the field of adult education (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Long, 1976; Selman, 1976). When Rockhill (1976) argued for the development of good monographic studies that could serve as a basis for the conceptual synthesis of the field, she reiterated what well-known adult educator Malcolm Knowles had said in 1962. In depth studies of subdivisions of adult learning in specific geographic areas, such as a state, during a given period of time is necessary in order to gain an accurate perspective of the roots of the adult education movement in the United States. The state of Wyoming is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year and historians are reflecting on the social, economic and educational successes and tribulations of the past century. Little is known, however, about the pioneering efforts of various voluntary associations in the provision of learning activities for adults when the state was in its infancy.

PURPOSE

Preliminary research indicated a great need for education and cultural enrichment for adults during early territorial times in Wyoming (Brady, 1900; Nel, 89). With no radio or television, and few libraries in existence (Nel, 87; Nel, 87), early settlers in Wyoming had no choice but to create their own informal learning opportunities. The purpose of this paper is to describe the role played by literary associations in the education of adults in Wyoming around

the turn of the century. Emphasis is placed on learning activities in Cheyenne and Laramie--the two major towns in the state at that time.

METHOD

An extensive analysis of published and unpublished documents was done to gather information for this research project. Major emphasis was placed on primary resources located in the University of Wyoming Archives, the Reference and Document Department of the Coe Library on the campus of the University of Wyoming, and the Wyoming State Archives. The proceedings of clubs and associations, the contents of individual archival collections, and the files of the main newspapers of that time period was systematically reviewed. Valuable information was extracted from the Laramie Boomerang, the Daily Boomerang, the Laramie Weekly Sentinel, the Cheyenne Daily Leader, the Laramie Republican, and the Cheyenne State Leader.

Limitations

As the case is in most historical studies, researchers are limited to sources available. Specific limitations for this research project were the lack of complete minutes of some associations and insufficient date and resource referencing of potentially valuable newspaper clippings.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The first white settlers came to Wyoming in 1853 (Baker, 1908). One of the most potent factors in bringing settlers into Wyoming was the building of the Union Pacific Railroad (Bartlett, 1918). Towns started to develop in 1867, and in 1869 a territorial government was established (Cheyenne Daily Leader, April 17, 1869). Between 1880 and statehood in 1890 the population increased from 20,789 to 62,555 (U. S. Census, 1895). Early settlers brought with them a background of refinement, religion and social habits that had to be merged into a new environment with fewer cultural facilities (Beard, 1933). Evidence indicates that adults had a lively interest in education (Cheyenne Daily Leader, 1967; Swanson, 1908; Cook, 1909). Social

clubs, fraternal organizations, women's clubs and church groups were established as soon as towns came into being. While most of these institutions contributed to the education of adults, it appears that they were not primarily concerned with learning. In most cases education was viewed as a coordinate function, paralleling other purposes such as community service, recreation, general professional development or fraternity. Literary organizations, however, seem to be the exception. Minutes of these institutions indicate a major concern with the intellectual development of their members (Matson, 1902-1932).

Literary Organizations Before 1900

The Cheyenne Literary Association

The town of Cheyenne had a literary association within six months after its establisment in 1867. It adopted a constitution on December 3, 1867, and started its educational activities immediately by debating a controversial topic, viz. "The financial conditions of the country renders it both justifiable and expedient to repudiate the national war debt." (Cheyenne Daily Leader, Dec. 7, 1867). According to the Cheyenne Leader of December 12, 1867 debates were held on a regular basis. This paper also mentions the fact that several members wanted to learn the "art of public speaking." It is important to note that the meetings were open to the general public. In the January 5, 1868 issue the public was specifically invited to come and listen to "some fine recitations." In March the editor of the Cheyenne Leader drew his readers' attention to the association's "laudable efforts to promote intelligence and morality" in the city. According to him the groups work was of " incalculable benefit to the community."

The Wyoming Literary Association

Laramie, the second town to be established alongside the Pacific Railroad was quick to follow the example set by Cheyenne. Within two years after Cheyenne had started its club, the Leader (Nov. 18, 1870) reported that the young men in Laramie had formed a flourishing

literary society under the name of Wyoming Literary Association and that they had a regular course of lectures delivered to them.

The Clio Club of Laramie

According to clippings in the Grace Hebard Scrapbook adults in Laramie were actively involved in informal learning activities. Several literary clubs existed in this town during the 1890's. Of these, the Clio Club appeared to be the most prosperous as can be seen from the following clipping:

> The Clio Club, although not often brought to public attention, is one of the most prominent literary organizations the city ever had. This is saying a great deal as the city today numbers half a dozen such associations all of which are engaged in some special study of history, science or art (Hebard Scrapbook,1895).

The goal being to study history, the club had chosen the name Clio, after the Greek muse of history and epic poetry. Celebrating its third anniversary in 1895, this club announced that, having studied "a century each of French history" during the previous two years, it would study German history during the coming year. A typical program at this club's fortnightly meetings consisted of the reading of a few famous quotations, followed by a historical outline "embracing contemporary history," an essay of twenty to thirty minutes, a discussion period, and a few minutes recess. Programs were concluded with what was called a "question box" period, and a short business session (Hebard Scrapbook 1893). It was common practice in this club to require each member to present one paper, do one reading, and lead one discussion session during a season (Hebard Scrapbook, 1897).

Testifying to its educational value, a newspaper clipping stated that "well-prepared papers, animated discussions and bright thoughts are the order of the meetings." By 1897 members had already discussed French, German, and Italian history and were planning to devote the 1897 winter months to a study of Holland and Belgium (Hebard Scrapbook, 1897).

Literary Associations After 1900

The Young Men's Literary Club of Cheyenne

Under the leadership of Mr. W. C. Deming Cheyenne organized a Young Men's Literary Club in 1902. This club had a strong educational philosophy, as can be seen from the following excerpt of its purpose and goals (Minutes of the First Meeting of the Young Men's Literary Club, April 16, 1902):

> The intention of the founders of this club was to seek the benefits derived from the training of the mind in literary pursuits, the interchange of ideas and the discussion of topics of public interest. Seeking the Kingdom of Light . . . the state where armaments are thoughts, ideas are weapons and trophies are the pages of the world's greatest masters. The Kingdom of the Light, is the kingdom of the intellect, of the imagination the heart, the spirit and the things of the spirit (Matson, 1902-1932).

In the preamble of the rules and regulations of this club, strong emphasis was placed on the importance of books, art, poetry, and music in the continual development of man (Matson,1902-1932). According to a listing of topics discussed over the period 1902 to 1932, a large number of the presentations could be classified as highly educational. The majority of lectures, which were prepared by individual members, dealt with current issues. The minutes of this society provides evidence of a constant striving to keep discussions on a high intellectual level and to encourage the exchange of ideas. The following random sample of topics gives some indication of what the areas of interest were of this group during the period under review (Matson,1902-1932).

October 2, 1903 -	Race suicide in America
January 29, 1904 -	The presidential outlook
June 3, 1904 -	The election of U. S. senators by direct vote
April 14, 1905 -	Edward Oliver Wolcott

June 7, 1907 -	Charles Evans Hughes
November 12, 1909 -	The English House of Lords
April 8, 1910 -	The political aspects of our Philippine possessions
June 17, 1910 -	Log book on a trip to Panama
February 2, 1912 -	The changing Chinese
January 31, 1913 -	The Young Turk movement
September 12, 1913 -	Criminal procedure in Scotland
December 10, 1915 -	Is the demand for poetry waning?
March 17, 1916 -	Saint Patrick

The Laramie Literary Club

In 1906, a group of men in Laramie met with the purpose of organizing a club, "similar to the Young Men's Literary Club of Cheyenne" (Minutes of the Laramie Literary Club, 1906-1916). The club was to meet every Thursday night, at which time a literary program would be conducted (Rules of the Laramie Literary Club, 1906). The first subject to be discussed by this newly formed society focused on the pro's and con's of socialism (Minutes, Feb. 8, 1906). A review of the scheduled speakers and the topics they had chosen to discuss during the first year of its existence, provide evidence of the educational value of the meetings of this society.

March 1, 1906 -	Is the daily newspaper deteriorating?
March 15, 1906 -	Locomotion, by F. N. Rogers. The relations of the U. S with the Chinese, by Will Murray.
March 22, 1906 -	Radium, by Professor Moudy. The present railway question, by Mr. Patterson.
March 29, 1906 -	The modern university, by Dr. Tisdel The use of forest reserves for grazing, by F. S. King.
April 5, 1906-	The compulsory school attendence law, by Prof. Lee. The spirit of true democracy, by Mr. Burrage
April 12, 1906 -	The Philippine Islands, by Mr. McEwen.

April 26, 1906 - A debate on the "City water question."

May 3, 1906 - Immigration, by A. W. Walton.

June 14, 1906 - The packing house industry, by H. G. Knight

Judging from the minutes of the association, it appears that a number of university faculty members were involved with the organization. On June 22, 1906, when a new slate of officers was elected, C. P. Arnold, member of the Board of Trustees, became President while Professors Quaintance and Moudy were appointed to serve as the Program Committee. According to the Rules and Regulations the Program Committee had full control over the topics to be discussed, and the assignment of individual members to prepare and present papers. It appears that each member of the group was required to present a paper. It is not clear whether failure to do so resulted in a loss of membership. The following excerpt from the official Rules and Regulations provides an indication of the club's serious commitment to keeping the educational standard high. Among other things the Program Committee was expected:

> to prepare a literary program for the club for each regular meeting and for at least two regular meetings in advance and to notify each member placed upon the program of the subject as assigned and the date of the performance. Unless impracticable or by his consent, no member after regular performance of the literary program shall be again regularly assigned thereon until every other member shall have been so assigned. Any member who shall fail to perform when regularly assigned shall be assigned again to perform within twelve weeks following such failure, unless such member shall re-establish standing by a proper voluntary performance before such second assignment is made. Members shall be given due credit for any and all proper voluntary performances. The Program Committee shall promptly report to the Club or the Secretary thereof, the name of each and every member who may become delinquent in

connection with the literary program under these rules (Rules of the Laramie Literary Club, p. 5)

In 1907, W. S. Ingham became the secretary and treasurer of this club. Reviewing the minutes of this society as it continued to exist over the years, showed that the educational standard was maintained. The following random sample of topics, taken from the minutes of 1910-1912, illustrates this point:

The educational system of France
Slum life in great cities
The insurgents in Congress
Tolstoi and his work
Secret and fraternal organizations
The history of the democratic party
The progess of Japan
The life and work of the great poet Strindberg

Believing that the educational value of the meetings could still be raised, Professor Heyl suggested in 1910 that "the club take up some set topic for continued study (Minutes of the Laramie Literary Club, Dec. 15, 1910). Although a committee consisting of himself, Professor Stromquist, and four other members was consequently appointed to advise the club on this proposal, nothing further was mentioned about it in the minutes. Literary topics for discussion still appeared to deal with separate individual subjects.

Members, apparently, were also concerned about the provision of educational opportunities for other adults besides their closed group. At the meeting of May 25, 1916 it was proposed that evening schools should be established for the benefit of the aliens in Laramie Although the motion was not accepted since the majority of the members felt that Laramie did not have enough aliens to justify such a school a second proposal, to the effect that faculty

members be invited to deliver weekly public addresses under the auspices of the club for the duration of Summer School, was accepted (Minutes, May 25, 1916).

The Reading Circle of Laramie

Another literary group with a serious commitment to education existed in Laramie during this time period. This group, who called themselves the Reading Circle of Laramie, scheduled periods of six months for the study of a specific topic. In the winter of 1914, the Laramie Boomerang (Nov. 21) reported that Professor Emma H. Knight, Instructor of Home Economics, had presented a "most interesting paper on Egyptian architecture to the Reading Circle," as part of this group's six months study period of architecture. A month and a half later, the Boomerang (Jan. 9, 1915) mentioned that Mrs. Arnold, wife of a Member of the Board of Trustees, gave a presentation on the "Architecture of western Asia."

With the exception of the Clio Club and the Reading Circle of Laramie it appears that membership was limited to men in the majority of literary associations. The main agency for the creation of learning opportunities for women during the period under review appears to be women's clubs.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Evidence suggest that literary associations played a major role in the provision of learning opportunities for adults during the pioneer years of the state of Wyoming. Although various organizations, such as fraternal groups, women clubs, and church groups, contributed to the education of adults, literary associations appear to have had the most clearly developed educational goals. In most other instances the education of adults was viewed as a coordinate function.

It is hoped that this study will contribute towards the formation of a basis for the conceptual synthesis of the field of adult education and that it will also provide a more accurate perspective of the roots of informal adult education in Wyoming. Further research is needed

to determine the role played by other voluntary organizations in the provision of educational opportunities for early settlers.

REFERENCES

Beard, F. B. (1933). Wyoming from territorial days to the present, p. 324. Chicago: The American Historical Society, Inc.

Brady, C. T. (1900). Recollections of a missionary in the great west. New York: Scribner's Sons.

Cook, A.D. (1909). Educational progress in Wyoming. Wyoming School Journal, 6(1), 9.

Cheyenne Daily Leader, Oct. 24, 1867; Dec. 7, 12, 1867; Jan. 5, 12, 1868; Mar. 5, 1868; Ap. 17, 1869; Nov. 18, 1870.

Darkenwald, G. G. & Merriam, S. B. (1982). Adult education: Foundations and practice, p. 26. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

Eleventh Census of the United States (1895). Population Part I, 1890. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office.

Heberd Scrapbook (1893, 1895, 1897). wf 378.8 w994, University of Wyoming Archives, American Heritage Center, Laramie, Wyoming.

Knowles, M. S. (1962). The adult education movement in the United States, p. viii. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Laramie Daily Boomerang, Jan. 15, 1915.

Long, H. B. (1976). Continuing education of adults in colonial America, p. iv. Syracuse: Syracuse University Publication.

Matson, R. M. (1902-1932). Addresses before the Young Men's Literary Club, 815M434, Wyoming State Historical Research and Publications Division, Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Minutes of the first meeting of the Young Men's Literary Club, April 16, 1902, 815M434, Wyoming State Historical Research and Publications Division, Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Minutes of the Laramie Literary Club, 1906-1916. Feb. 8, 1906; Mar. 1, 15, 22, 29. 1906; Ap. 5, 12, 26, 1906; Mar. 15, 22, 29, 1906; Ap. 5, 12, 26, 1906; May 3, 1906; June 14, 22, 1906; Jan 6, 29, 1910; Oct. 8, 1910; Dec. 15, 1910; Aug. 10, 22, 1912; Oct. 24, 1912; Jan. 14, 1915; May 25, 1916. W. S. Ingham Collection, University of Wyoming Archives, American Heritage Center, Laramie, Wyoming.

Nel, J. (1989). A territory if founded: Political, social, economic and educational conditions in Wyoming, 1850-1890. Annals of Wyoming, 61(2), 2-12.

Nel, J. (1988). Historical notes on pioneer libraries in Wyoming, Part II. Adult Education News, 53, 7.

Nel, J. (1987). Historical notes on pioneer libraries in Wyoming, Part I. Adult Education News, 52, 9.

Rules and Regulations of the Laramie Literary Club, 1906. Acc. No. 113, W. S. Ingham Collection, University of Wyoming Archives, American Heritage Center, Laramie, Wyoming.

Rockhill, K. (1976). The past as prologue: Toward an expanded view of adult education. Adult Education, 26(4), 197.

Selman, G. R. (1976). A chronology of adult education in British Columbia, p. 4. Vancouver: Center for Continuing Education, University of British Columbia.

Swanson, O. E. (1908). President's address to the Wyoming State Teachers Association. Wyoming School Journal, 4(6), 105.

END

U.S. Dept. of Education

Office of Education
Research and
Improvement (OERI)

ERIC

Date Filmed

March 29, 1991